

# One-stop opportunity center

## Employment Resource Center helps connect employees with employers



Photo by Peter Day The Hesperia Employment Resource Center is a hub of activity for job seekers. The location serves up to 1,500 each month.

By PETER DAY/Star Editor

Out of work and with her only previous employment as a fast food restaurant cashier, Lori's future didn't seem too bright. So she turned to the Employment Resource Center in Hesperia for assistance.

The ERC, located near the corner of Main Street and Eleventh Avenue, helped her enroll in the Victor Valley College nursing program. Upon completion, the former near minimum wage worker began a new career as a Registered Nurse — with a starting salary of \$6,635 per month.

Each month, 1,200 to 1,500 job seekers like Lori— or those interested in simply improving their careers — utilize the services of the Hesperia ERC, which serves the entire Victor Valley and surrounding areas. Last year, the San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board, which oversees the Hesperia and other ERCs, assisted nearly 78,000 job seekers.

“We help connect local people with local jobs,” said Barbara Halsey, director of the agency.

Although not everyone experiences as dramatic an upgrade in employment as Lori, the Hesperia ERC

has numerous success stories. A former National Guard employee named Arnold saw his earnings go from \$18 to \$28 per hour with the ERC's help.

But sometimes the ERC's help isn't only measured in dollars per hour but in personal pride and hope. One man came to the ERC after having not worked for three years due to a back injury. After having no luck re-entering his field as a Class A truck driver, the ERC assisted him in developing his resume and finding leads. Today, he is working locally, and his future is promising.

But the ERC also helps employers, including large enterprises such as the Apple WalMart distribution center, the Southern California Logistics Airport and others, to find workers.

"What business needs in workforce, we want to provide," she said. "It basically starts with the demand of business."

By helping develop a viable workforce, the Victor Valley is continuing to become a more vibrant location for commerce and industry. The key employment sectors are logistics distribution, health care, construction, manufacturing and transportation.

"It's almost a role of intermediary," Halsey said.

The ERC also complements the community colleges by helping graduates translate the language of education into a language of business.

One of the keys, according to Halsey, is "tailoring and customizing training."

The Hesperia ERC has a staff of trained, certified career counselors who counsel job seekers one-on-one, or for those who prefer a more self-directed approach, teach them to use the ERC's resource library or computers. The constantly expanding library includes books on a wide diversity of subjects.

ERC representatives conduct personal interviews to address skills and detect issues that can block vocational improvement. After the initial screening, representatives direct clients toward a tailored skilled advancement — and career.

"We want people to know that there are good jobs," Halsey said.

The Hesperia ERC is at 15555 Main Street #G3/G4. For more information, call 949-8526.

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